



BONNER COUNTY NOXIOUS WEEDS

1500 Hwy 2, Suite 101 • Sandpoint, ID 83864 • Phone: (208) 255-5681ext.6
<https://www.bonnercountyid.gov/noxious-weeds>

Weed of the Month

By Chase Youngdahl, *Bonner County Weeds Manager*

Those four days beginning with the last weekend of March and persisting through the first couple of days that week was a welcome burst of spring weather. With temperatures in the 60s and enough sun filtering through the scattered cloud deck, my pasty winter skin gave way to the initial summer base layer. It was also enough to jumpstart the development of some winter annual weeds; Cheatgrass, Shepherd's Purse and Redstem Filaree were a few that I saw. Clearly that was fool's spring and we then catapulted into second (maybe third) winter. It's mid-April as I'm writing this and it has been cold, windy and intermittently stormy since the end of that early incalescence, and the extended forecast shows cold temperatures (including sub-freezing at night) for as far as the projection goes out. Hopefully by the time this is published in early May we are in actual spring. If soil temperatures are not at the ideal level by the time you have this paper in your hand, then we are probably screwed. That was a joke, but in seriousness, we shouldn't be far off from adequate soil temperature if not there yet. When the soil warms up, plant activity increases, which maximizes consistent efficacy of herbicide treatments on weeds, especially perennials. May and June are generally the best months to treat a plethora of the commonly battled offenders in Bonner County.

This weed of the month is a less commonly battled offender, and one to keep an eye out for; **Yellow Flag Iris** (*Iris Pseudacorus*). It's an exotic Iris introduced from Europe as an ornamental and inhabits aquatic margins; around ponds, along irrigation ditches and on the banks of lakes and rivers. It is on the Idaho Noxious Weed List, and we have it categorized as EDRR (early detection, rapid response) in Bonner County. It forms clumps growing 3-4 feet in height, and the leaves are sword-like with blooms that show off a brilliant yellow. Reproduction is similar to many other perennials; vegetative and by seed. The rhizomes are thick and the seeds are quite large—these parts are designed to float on water, which is the primary vector of spread. The seed capsules grow to about 3 inches in length, and the seeds themselves resemble cloves of garlic.



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The impacts can be significant if Yellow Flag Iris takes a stronghold. It displaces native shoreline vegetation, alters soils and can disrupt water flow, which all lead to the degradation and/or destruction of important wildlife and fish habitat. It's also poisonous to animals (and humans) if enough of the foliage or rhizomes are consumed.

We're close to the upper limit on the invasion curve regarding EDRR status with Yellow Flag Iris in Bonner County, but my observations indicate that it's not spreading lightning fast like other noxious weeds and invasive vegetation tend to, so I feel comfortable enough keeping it in the EDRR category and continuing to pursue eradication (similar to the large Knotweed complex). I need assistance from the public, though. It flowers from about late May until mid-June in our area, which is the perfect time to spot the infestations. Keep an eye on the area's lake and river shores, retention ponds, landscape ponds and riparian wetlands. Since the showy flowers display an appealing look, it is often dug up and transplanted when discovered during the flowering period, which is an unfortunately common spread mechanism. There are other species of Iris that are native or benign, and they are all smaller than Yellow Flag, but otherwise look very similar. Most non-invasive Irises have purple or pink flowers. Siberian Iris is the primary non-invasive yellow flowered specimen—it grows to heights of 2 feet or less and the flowers are generally a more pale shade of yellow compared to its invasive rival. These other Irises can also be found away from water, but I have yet to see a Yellow Flag Iris more than a couple of feet away from the water's edge.

If you have or find an infestation of Yellow Flag Iris, report it to my department and we can get it treated under the EDRR program upon identification confirmation.

As for resources to assist with the more widespread noxious weeds, i.e. – Spotted Knapweed, Oxeye Daisy, Canada Thistle, Orange/Yellow Hawkweeds, etc., we have the Neighborhood Cooperative Cost Share available to provide private property owners with some reimbursement for the cost of herbicides to control them. The pre-application deadline is May 31, and the forms are available on our website. You can pick up hard copies at our office if you do not have printing capabilities. Since quality herbicide application equipment is somewhat of a niche market, we offer power sprayers for rent to the public that are designed for making efficient applications to fields, pastures and roadsides/driveways. Info sheets on these sprayers are also available on our website. Additionally, we try to keep the CO-OP stocked with our program forms and informational flyers, and they usually place them in the herbicide aisle. Let's get a successful season underway.